



## Secretary-General

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### **SECRETARY-GENERAL SAYS PARIS DONORS' MEETING ON PALESTINIANS AIMS**

#### **TO RECONFIRM WORLD'S COMMITMENT TO NEW PEACE PROCESS**

Following are the remarks of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to the morning session of the Donors' Meeting to Support the Palestinian Authority in Paris, 17 December:

Thank you very much for joining together today with UN staff around the world who are observing a moment of silence in honour of all the victims of the December 11 th terrorist attacks in Algiers

I also want to thank all of you who over the last few days have sent words of sympathy. We at the United Nations, truly appreciate it.

Those who target innocent civilians in this way commit a terrible crime. Terrorism is never justifiable, as all 192 member states agreed last year when they came together to adopt the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. It hurts all nations – large and small, rich and poor – and takes it toll on all human beings of every age and income, culture and religion.

The Algiers attack will never deter us in our vital work around the world, regardless of threats to our staff. Any attack on the United Nations is clearly an attack against the people we seek to help. Our communal efforts to help those who suffer, to help peace must be redoubled.

I will now turn to the subject at hand.

Last month, the international community gathered at Annapolis , to signal their support for a new process for peace between Israel and the Palestinians. We are here today, in Paris , to reconfirm our commitment towards this process, and to ensure that this commitment translates into a new and better reality on the ground. Indeed, we must move quickly now, because the process can succeed only if we overcome the gap between our diplomatic efforts and the situation on the ground.

Over the past seven years, the conflict has taken a heavy toll. The World Bank's report leaves no doubt that the social and economic situation in the occupied Palestinian territory has declined dramatically. Poverty and unemployment have increased at an alarming rate in Gaza and many parts of the West Bank . Access to basic services, jobs and markets has declined significantly. The Palestinian private sector, once thriving, has all but collapsed in the Gaza Strip. Palestinian society has become more deeply divided, while the security of many Israelis has been directly threatened.

We have the opportunity today to take the initial steps that can reverse these troubling trends. And indeed, today I am convinced we have better grounds for optimism than at any time in the recent past:

In the last months, Israeli and Palestinian leaders have re-started their bilateral discussions. They have shown courage and resolve in maintaining this dialogue in the face of extraordinary difficulties on the ground, and they have now set out to try to negotiate a peace treaty in 2008. Likewise, Mr. Blair's efforts to bring the parties together to stimulate economic renewal have already begun to bear fruit.

And after several months of intense work and consultation, Prime Minister Fayyad and his Government have prepared the programme for the next three years. It clearly and coherently sets out the investment and reform priorities of the Palestinian Authority. Its targets are ambitious but achievable, and it has received the blessing of the International Financial Institutions.

The programme also sets out the steps that Palestinians, Israelis and the international community should take together. It calls upon all stakeholders to take a shared responsibility in stabilizing the situation on the ground and create the basis for a functioning state and economy.

Within this cooperative framework, it will be critical to ensure that the operations of the Palestinian Authority, in particular the provision of salaries and basic

services, are sustained. It will also be important for new investments to be made in education, health and other key areas that Prime Minister Fayyad has identified. I call upon the donor partners to invest now, to invest generously, and to remain steadfast in their financial commitment over the next 36 months.

Above all, a new climate of confidence, security and physical mobility must be created on the ground. Only in this way will those most affected by the conflict also see benefits of investing, personally and collectively, in a new and more promising reality. For true gains to be made, measures that work contrary to the positive momentum created at Annapolis need be avoided.

I have made no secret of my concern for the 1.4 million people of Gaza who today are living under the most abhorrent conditions. With few exceptions, all manner of legitimate trade with Gaza has come to a standstill, with devastating effects on the economy and on family livelihoods. Access to essential services and utilities, like health, water and energy, is becoming more uncertain each day.

In 2007, about 80 percent of the Gaza population are direct recipients of United Nations food assistance. The United Nations will continue to fulfill its responsibility to protect all persons affected by the conflict. To do this, the UN will continue to require the financial support of the international community. But humanitarian aid, by itself, cannot reverse the situation in Gaza. Unless broader steps are taken, the economic situation will worsen, with deep and very possibly dangerous implications. On this, we will need to move together with wisdom, pragmatism and creativity. I commend Prime Minister Fayyad's stated readiness for the Palestinian Authority to participate in solving the problem of the Gaza crossings, and I urge all of us to work constructively on this vital issue.

The international community must do its utmost to support the Palestinian Authority as it strives to tackle the immense challenges ahead. In these tasks, the entire United Nations system is ready to cooperate closely with the Palestinian Authority, and will continue to support the Palestinian people in their efforts to move forward.

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